



The Sunday of Holy Pentecost

After the Saviour's Ascension into the Heavens, the eleven Apostles and the rest of His disciples, the God-loving women who followed after Him from the beginning, His Mother, the most holy Virgin Mary, and His Brethren—all together about 120 souls—returned from the Mount of Olives to Jerusalem. Entering into the house where they gathered, they went into the upper room, and there they persevered in prayer and supplication, awaiting the coming of the Holy Spirit, as their divine teacher had promised them. In the meanwhile, they chose Matthias, who was elected to take the place of Judas among the Apostles.

Thus, on this day, the Seventh Sunday of Pascha, the tenth after the Ascension and the fiftieth day after Pascha, at the third hour of the day from the rising of the sun, there suddenly came a sound from Heaven, as when a mighty wind blows, and it filled the whole house where the Apostles and the rest with them were gathered. Immediately after the sound, there appeared tongues of fire that divided and rested upon the head of each one. Filled with the Spirit, all those present began speaking not in their native tongue, but in other tongues and dialects, as the Holy Spirit had instructed them.

The multitudes that had come together from various places for the feast, most of whom were Jews by race and religion, were called Parthians, Medes, Elamites, and so forth, according to the places here they dwelt. Though they spoke many tongues, they were present in Jerusalem by divine dispensation. When they heard that sound that came down from Heaven to the place where the disciples of Christ were gathered, all ran together to learn what had taken place. But they were confounded when they came and heard the Apostles speaking in their own tongues. Marvelling at this, they said to one another, "Behold, are not all these which speak Galileans? How hear we every man in our own tongue, wherein we were born?" But others, because of their foolishness and excess of evil, mocked the wonder and said that the Apostles were drunken.

Then Peter stood up with the eleven, and raising his voice, spoke to all the people, proving that that which had taken place was not drunkenness, but the fulfillment of God's promise that had been spoken by the Prophet Joel: "And it shall come to pass in the last days, that I shall pour out My Spirit upon all flesh, and your sons and daughters shall prophesy" (Joel 2:28), and he preached Jesus of Nazareth unto them, proving in many ways that He is Christ the Lord, Whom the Jews crucified but God raised from the dead. On hearing Peter's teaching, many were smitten with compunction and received the word. Thus, they were baptized, and on that day about three thousand souls were added to the Faith of Christ.

Such, therefore, are the reasons for today's feast: the coming of the All-holy Spirit into the world, the completion of the Lord Jesus Christ's promise, and the fulfillment of the hope of the sacred disciples, which we celebrate today. This is the final feast of the great mystery and dispensation of God's incarnation. On this last, and great, and saving day of Pentecost, the Apostles of the Saviour, who were unlearned fishermen, made wise now of a sudden by the Holy Spirit, clearly and with divine authority spoke the heavenly doctrines. They became heralds of the truth and teachers of the whole world. On this day they were ordained and began their apostleship, of which the salvation of those three thousand souls in one day was the comely and marvellous first fruit.

Some erroneously hold that Pentecost is "the birthday of the Church." But this is not true, for the teaching of the holy Fathers is that the Church existed before all other things. In the second vision of The Shepherd of Hermas we read: "Now brethren, a revelation was made unto me in my sleep by a youth of exceeding fair form, who said to me, 'Whom thinkest thou the aged woman, from whom thou receivedst the book, to be?' I say, 'The Sibyl.' 'Thou art wrong,' saith he, 'she is not.' 'Who then is she' I say. 'The Church,' saith he. I said unto him, 'Wherefore then is she aged?' 'Because,' saith he, 'she was created before all things; therefore is she aged, and for her sake the world was framed.'" Saint

Gregory the Theologian also speaks of “the Church of Christ...both before Christ and after Christ” (PG 35:1108-9). Saint Epiphanius of Cyprus writes, “The Catholic Church, which exists from the ages, is revealed most clearly in the incarnate advent of Christ” (PG 42:640). Saint John Damascene observes, “The Holy Catholic Church of God, therefore, is the assembly of the holy Fathers, Patriarchs, Prophets, Apostles, Evangelists, and Martyrs who have been from the very beginning, to whom were added all the nations who believed with one accord” (PG 96, 1357C). According to Saint Gregory the Theologian, “The Prophets established the Church, the Apostles conjoined it, and the Evangelists set it in order” (PG 35, 589A). The Church existed from the creation of the Angels, for the Angels came into existence before the creation of the world, and they have always been members of the Church. Saint Clement, Bishop of Rome, says in his second epistle to the Corinthians, the Church “was created before the sun and moon”; and a little further on, “The Church existeth not now for the first time, but hath been from the beginning” (II Cor. 14).

That which came to pass at Pentecost, then, was the ordination of the Apostles, the commencement of the apostolic preaching to the nations, and the inauguration of the priesthood of the new Israel. Saint Cyril of Alexandria says that “Our Lord Jesus Christ herein ordained the instructors and teachers of the world and the stewards of His divine Mysteries...showing together with the dignity of Apostleship, the incomparable glory of the authority given them ...Revealing them to be splendid with the great dignity of the Apostleship and showing them forth as both stewards and priests of the divine altars...they became fit to initiate others through the enlightening guidance of the Holy Spirit” (PG 74, 708-712). Saint Gregory Palamas says, “Now, therefore...the Holy Spirit descended...showing the Disciples to be supernal luminaries...and the distributed grace of the Divine Spirit came through the ordination of the Apostles upon their successors” (Homily 24,10). And Saint Sophronius, Bishop of Jerusalem, writes, “After the visitation of the Comforter, the Apostles became high priests” (PG 87, 3981B). Therefore, together with the Baptism of the Holy Spirit which came upon them who were present in the upper chamber, which the Lord had foretold as recorded in the Acts, “ye shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days hence” (Acts 1:5), the Apostles were also appointed and raised to the high priestly rank, according to Saint John Chrysostom (PG 60, 21). On this day commenced the celebration of the Holy Eucharist by which we become “partakers of the Divine Nature” (II Peter 1:4). For before Pentecost, it is said of the Apostles and disciples only that they abode in “prayer and supplication” (Acts 1:14); it is only after the coming of the Holy Spirit that they persevered in the “*breaking of bread*,”—that is, the communion of the Holy Mysteries—“and in prayer” (Acts 2:42).

The feast of holy Pentecost, therefore, determined the beginning of the priesthood of grace, not the beginning of the Church. Henceforth, the Apostles proclaimed the good tidings “in country and town,” preaching and baptizing and appointing shepherds, imparting the priesthood to them whom they judged were worthy to minister, as Saint Clement writes in his first Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Cor. 42).

All foods allowed during the week following Pentecost.

Dismissal Hymn. Plagal of Fourth Tone

BLESSED art Thou, O Christ our God, Who hast shown forth the fishermen as supremely wise by sending down upon them the Holy Spirit, and through them didst draw the world into Thy net. O Befriender of man, glory be to Thee.

Kontakion. Plagal of Fourth Tone

ONCE, when He descended and confounded the tongues, the Most High divided the nations; and when He divided the tongues of fire, He called all men into unity; and with one accord we glorify the All-holy Spirit.

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Selected Hymns
From
THE PENTECOSTARION

MATINS

OIKOS

GRANT Thou speedy and lasting consolation unto Thy servants, O Jesus, when our spirits are despondent. Be Thou not parted from our souls when they be in affliction; be Thou not far from our minds when we are in perils, but do Thou ever anticipate our needs. Draw nigh unto us, draw nigh, O Thou Who art everywhere present, and even as Thou art ever with Thine Apostles, thus do Thou also unite unto Thyself us who long for Thee, O Compassionate One, that, being united with Thee, we may praise and glorify Thine All-holy Spirit.

The Synaxarion of the Menaion, then the following:

On this day, the Eighth Sunday of Pascha, we celebrate Holy Pentecost.

Verses

In a violent wind doth Christ distribute
the Divine Spirit
In the form of fiery tongues unto
the Apostles.
In one great day, the Spirit was poured
forth on the Fishermen.

By the intercessions of the holy Apostles
O Christ our God, have mercy on us.
Amen.

For the Praises we allow for six verses and chant the following Stichera, repeating each one:

Fourth Tone

TODAY all the nations beheld strange things in the city of David, when the Holy Spirit descended in fiery tongues, as Luke, the herald of things divine declared; for he said: As the disciples oft Christ were gathered together, there came a sound as of a mighty wind, and it filled the house where they were sitting; and all began to articulate strange and foreign words, doctrines strange and new, strange and new teachings of the Holy Trinity. *(Twice)*

THE Holy Spirit hath ever been, and is, and shall be, neither beginning nor ending; but He is ever ranked and numbered together with the Father and the Son. He is Life, and life-creating; Light, and light-bestowing; by nature good, and the source of goodness; through Him is the Father known, and the Son is glorified; and thereby all men acknowledge a single sovereignty, single covenant, one adoration of the Holy Trinity. *(Twice)*

THE Holy Spirit is Light and Life, and a living, noetic Fountain, a Spirit of Wisdom, a Spirit of understanding; a good, an upright, a noetic Spirit, presiding in power and purging offences. He is God, and doth deify; He is Fire, issuing from Fire, speaking, working, distributing the gifts; through Whom all the Prophets, and the Apostles of God, and all the Martyrs received their crowns. Strange is this report, strange and new this sight, a fire divided that these gifts may be apportioned. *(Twice)*

Glory; both now. *Plagal of Second Tone*

HEAVENLY King, O Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, Who are everywhere present and filleth all things, O treasury of every good and Bestower of Life; come and dwell in us, and cleanse our souls, O Good One.

Then the Priest maketh the dismissal in this manner:

CHRIST our True God, who emptied Himself from the Father's bosom, having taken upon Himself our human nature and deified it, and Who thereafter ascending straightway into the Heavens and sitteth at the right hand of God the Father, then sent down the divine, holy, consubstantial, and co-eternal Spirit, equal in might and glory, upon His holy Disciples and Apostles, and through Him, having illumined them, and through them, the whole world, by the intercessions of His all-immaculate and all-blameless holy Mother, of the holy glorious, all-famed, God-proclaiming, and Spirit-bearing Apostles, and of all the Saints—may He have mercy and save us for the sake of His goodness.



Rejoice, O immaculate palace of the King of All!
Rejoice, dwelling place of God and of the Word!
To Him together with the Father and the Holy Spirit,
And to thee,
O Daughter of the Father,
Mother of the Son, and Bride of the Holy Spirit,
Be honour and glory from us mortals
Unto the ages of ages. Amen.¹

¹ Saint Dimitri of Rostov: *Homily on the Nativity of the Most Holy Theotokos*, The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints, Vol. I, September, p.159. Chrysostom Press House Springs MO, 1994